

## SGA members take Diwali into their own hands

Chloe Els  
*Beacon Staff*

The best part of Diwali, according to Sam Rajesh, a junior visual media arts major and Spiritual Life senator for the Student Government Association, is lighting diyas—small oil lamps—with her family.

“You have to put [the diyas] at the front of every door to welcome our god to come through,” she said. “I remember it distinctly: being with my family, surrounded by light.”

Diwali is a five-day religious holiday observed by practitioners of Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It is a celebration of light in the face of darkness.

SGA President Pranit Chand, a senior interdisciplinary studies major who celebrates Diwali every year, said Diwali “signifies the triumph of good over evil.” Chand interprets it as a time to fight internal demons and become a better person. Diwali is often thought of as a period of introspection; taking the time to figure out how to move forward from what in a more positive way.

The different cultures that observe Diwali interpret the holidays in different ways.

Hindus often light diyas as symbols of prosperity for the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. Jains honor Diwali

as a time of attaining spiritual enlightenment. For Sikhs, Diwali celebrates Guru Hargobind, who fought to free himself and 52 other princes from imprisonment.

SGA plans to celebrate Diwali by hosting a series of events for Emerson students to partake in. These events range from diya decorating contests, to henna art, to painting a Rangoli design on the lobby floor of the 2 Boylston Place. Rangoli art, a colorful, geometric or floral pattern, is thought to promote luck and well-being.

While Chand shared his excitement for celebrating Diwali with other Emerson students, he also shared the difficulty of celebrating in a traditional way at Emerson. “We have to do an improvised version of Diwali,” he said.

One of the changes is replacing what would normally be a real flame in the diyas with LED lights to adhere to school policy. Another more significant difference is students not being able to spend the holiday with their families like many of them normally would. Instead, they turn to each other and surround themselves with community at school-sponsored events like this one.

SGA took the initiative to organize the Diwali celebrations this year be-

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## Sustainability Action Plan progresses with additional aid of working groups

Olivia LeDuc  
*Beacon Correspondent*

Emerson refined its pledge to carbon neutrality last month after unveiling the Climate Action Plan. The plan has since moved into its second phase—the formation of working groups.

Emerson committed in 2007 to achieve carbon neutrality on-campus by 2030. Following its commitment, the college released its Climate Action Plan in 2009, outlining goals to achieve carbon neutrality within the institution.

With eight years separating Emerson from its projected carbon neutrality, the college’s sustainability plan requires updating, to create a clearer plan of action, according to Campus Sustainability Manager Jennifer Lamy.

“We have made a lot of progress over the last 15 years,” Lamy said. “However, there is still lots of planning to do to push emissions down.”

Preparation for updating the Sustainability Action Plan began at the start of the fall semester, alongside the introduction of six working groups. The working groups intend to map out fresh recommendations and strategy developments for achieving the 2030 goal. The groups will create



*Illustration Rachel Choi*

a waste diversion plan, which the college’s current sustainability efforts do not account for.

The working groups are divided into six topics: emissions and offsets, resilience, equity and justice, waste, curriculum and research, and finance. The group’s planning structure is guided by the Green Ribbon’s GRCx Collaborative Climate Action Planning cohort. Emerson is one of seven higher education institutions in the Boston area working toward carbon mitigation under the cohort.

Each group has a range of faculty members and students inter-

ested in sustainability. Beginning next month, the working groups will convene in the first of four 90-minute meetings to discuss ideas, strategies, and goals for approaching new objectives related to the 2030 target.

The drafted plan will be presented to the Emerson community with an open-comment period. In the spring, each group will finalize a draft plan to propose to college leadership.

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## Queer Latinx artist sheds light on colonialism, immigration, and xenophobia using the human body

Samantha Deras and  
Alison Sincebaugh  
*Beacon Correspondents*

The smell of white sage and the sound of jingling keys filled the Media Art Gallery on Avery Street on Oct. 14 as a Mexico-City-born artist displayed a new performance piece.

“Go Back to Where You Came From!” is a performance-lecture piece by Emilio Rojas that investigates the history of colonialism and border trauma while highlighting xenophobia, queerness, and the contamination of interpersonal spaces.

As a queer, Latinx, immigrant, and indigenous multidisciplinary artist, Rojas uses performance, photo, video, and his body in political and critical ways to reexamine a variety of topics. Rojas said his goal with “Go Back to Where You Came From!” was to inspire audiences to view the history of colonialism and immigration through a different lens.

This installation was one of the many works in part of Rojas’ newest exhibition titled “tracing a wound through my body.” The exhibition, which debuted on Sept. 22 in collaboration with Emerson Contemporary, focuses on immi-

gration, identity, history, xenophobia and trauma.

Dr. Leonie Bradbury, a leading curator of contemporary art for ArtsEmerson, explained why ArtsEmerson chose to collaborate with Rojas.

“I was interested in having works brought to campus that were exploring immigration and issues around immigration because it was a topic that was in the news quite a bit,” Bradbury said in an interview with The Beacon. “This exhibition, when it was pitched to me, I thought it hit on so many different notes.”

Bradbury explains that although Rojas’ exhibition highlights immigration and xenophobia, it also comments on contamination in intimate spaces.

“It’s not just about the U.S. Mexico border,” Bradbury said. “It’s also about all these different kinds of boundaries, like personal boundaries and societal boundaries. I thought that it could really connect to a whole wide range of classes that are being taught at Emerson and different communities that are at Emerson.”

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## Women’s volleyball secures 13th win of the season, defeating Salve Regina

Leo Kagan  
*Beacon Staff*

As the fans poured into the Bobbi Brown and Steven Plofker Gym, the women’s volleyball team took on the Salve Regina Seahawks during Family Weekend, delivering a crowd-pleasing home sweep.

Heading into the match, the Lions were riding a six-consecutive-set win streak, adding three more in the battle against the Seahawks.

The first set began with an Emerson point as junior middle hitter Isabella Cubba tipped the ball over the net onto the court amidst a crowd of Seahawks’ defenders. The Lions stuck to this strategy throughout the match, opting for precise tap-overs instead of heavier spikes, despite the strategy running contrary to Head Coach Benjamin Read’s initial game plan.

“We knew [Salve Regina] played a shallow defense, and we were supposed to go for the corners,” said Read. “But we resort to what we’re comfortable doing instead of trusting ourselves. Had we tipped to deep corners, we would have probably had another four or five kills, and that’s what kept [the game] close.”

After Cubba’s initial kill, the Lions grabbed two more points to go up 3-0. The Seahawks clawed back and kept it a close game, eventually tying the Lions at 11. A powerful spike sent junior libero Caroline Davis scrambling to make a diving dig, allowing senior setter Caroline Bond to set up sophomore outside hitter Amelia



The win bumped the women’s volleyball team’s record to 14-3 / *Beacon Archives*

Comb’s spike for the kill.

The frantic rally would be the turning point in a tightly-contested set. The Lions went 14-6 to finish the first frame, clinching the 25-18 victory with an individual block by sophomore outside hitter Parker Cummings. Read said blocks like Cummings’ were key to the Lions’ win.

“We competed at the net and did a good job of blocking,” he said. “We just controlled the net for a bunch of the time out there.”

The Lions have been on the net all season long, and Cubba’s 1.07 blocks per set leads the NEWMAC.

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# News

## Local support for migrants at Joint Base Cape Cod continues after departure

Maeve Lawler  
Beacon Staff

The wave of community-based support in response to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' relocation of nearly 50 migrants from San Antonio, TX, to Martha's Vineyard last month continues even after the migrants' departure.

The migrants arrived on the island on Sept. 14 after being convinced by a woman identified as Perla Huerta, a former medic and counterintelligence officer in the Army, to board airplanes with the promise of free flights and jobs upon arrival in Massachusetts, according to a The New York Times article.

A few days later, migrants were ferried to Joint Base Cape Cod in Barnstable County, MA. Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced that shelter and humanitarian services would be provided for the migrants at the base on Sept. 16. Local organizations, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and members of the state's National Guard coordinated efforts to provide aid. The migrants left the base on Oct. 8, many of them finding housing in other parts of the state.

This unprecedented arrival of migrants is a small glimpse at a larger issue in Massachusetts. Many aid groups in Boston are overwhelmed with an influx of asylum-seekers—in recent months, thousands have come to the Boston area from countries including Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia, fleeing political violence and instability while searching for work and safety.

Two Cape Cod organizations, the Housing Assistance Corporation and Cape Cod Community College, volunteered their services to aid migrants on the base.

While on the base, HAC aided the migrants in finding housing and

resources once established at a new location.

"We provided what we already provide for clients who walk through our door on a normal basis," said HAC Chief External Affairs Officer Stefanie Coxé. "It was just scaled up for this volume."

HAC received a call from the state notifying them of the migrants' transition to Cape Cod early on. Members from HAC greeted them as they arrived at the base, along with representatives from Father Bill's & MainSpring, MEMA, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, according to an HAC press release.

According to Coxé, Father Bill's & MainSpring—a non-profit working to prevent homelessness in Southern Massachusetts—took a lead role in facilitating aid from local organizations. MEMA Acting Director Dawn Brantley said Father Bill's & MainSpring representatives brought "tremendous expertise and compassion" to the situation, per an Oct. 4 press release.

HAC focused on connecting migrants with their family members living in other parts of the state or country.

"In that case, it was figuring out 'What's the best way to get you there? What are your options once you get there?'" Coxé said.

According to Coxé, this triaging of needs is a core part of HAC's operation.

"We really run the gambit of helping people, from homelessness to homeownership, and helping them figure out what housing resources are available to them," Coxé said.

To respond better to unprecedented situations like this in the future, HAC launched a Humanitarian Response Fund and Volunteer Coordination initiative.

"There's not necessarily an existing program that works for the popula-

tion you're serving in an emergency," Coxé said. "The state or federal rules around whatever existing programs we administer are just not flexible enough to work for whatever that emergency may be."

The migrants' unexpected arrival didn't change HAC's approach to providing services, but instead reinforced how they operate in response to unprecedented situations. In the past, HAC has responded to various emergencies, including assisting New Orleans residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, supporting residents who lost their jobs in the pandemic, and most recently, helping Afghan and Haitian refugees amidst a housing shortage.

"We experienced this a number of times already and had such a vast experience doing it, but I think we provided some good modeling of how it could be approached from [Massachusetts'] perspective in the future," Coxé said. "As an organization that has been around for nearly 50 years, this is not the first time we've had a situation like this."

Another local source of aid came from Cape Cod Community College. Immediately, the college reached out to Dukes County Emergency Management and Martha's Vineyard Public Schools offering to assist through the 4Cs Adult Education Center and English as a Second Language program, according to a college-wide email from the college's president, John Cox. When the migrants were transported to the base, the 4Cs' offer remained standing.

John Hanlon, a coordinator for the Adult College Transitions Program, said 4Cs offers two free programs split into two phases. First, the Adult Education Center provides ESL and High School Equivalency Tests. Once HSET courses are complete, students have the option to take five free credit classes at the college through the Pro-

gram for Adult College Transitions.

As the Adult Education Center has a waitlist of nearly 300 prospective students, 4Cs did not offer to enroll migrants directly. However, many students and employees of the program volunteered their time to serve as translators and provide other language services, according to Joan Gallagher, the director of the Adult Education Center.

"We have... a number of students who have been very interested to help and assist, and a number of instructors who are multilingual and willing to provide any kind of support—especially translation services," Gallagher said. "I have students coming to me saying, 'What can we do?'"

Many students at the Adult Education Center and in the Program for Adult College Transitions are immigrants, who at one time sought out some of the same needs as those at the base.

"We have a great passion here for helping those who need to be helped," Gallagher said.

Due to the migrants' short stay at the base, none were enrolled in Hanlon or Gallagher's program. Still, both programs made it clear their employees continue to do community out-

reach to promote their services and the offer to aid migrants in need of language services still stands.

"If people are coming from other countries and they want to pursue higher education or they need a high school diploma to get a better job here, we [accept] people on a rolling admission," Hanlon said. "We can definitely accommodate them."

Most of the migrants have now found housing across Massachusetts in places like Brockton, Lowell, Stoughton, Provincetown, other areas on Cape Cod, and on Martha's Vineyard. Migrants are also eligible to apply for "U visas," as they are victims of a crime and actively assisting an investigation, according to Rachel Self, a Martha's Vineyard lawyer who spoke to The Boston Globe.

"I think it's really important to know that there are a lot of good people—good people who really stepped up," Gallagher said. "[Cape Cod] has a rather large immigrant population and so people take care of one another, and they're very respectful of one another's needs."

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Illustration Hailey Akau

## Emerson committed to creating carbon-neutral campus

Cont. from Pg. 1

Lamy said she feels optimistic that the service of the groups will steer the college toward tackling the threat of climate change in its "ambitious" 2030 neutrality timeline.

"I'm excited about all the brainstorming from these working groups to see where we can continue to lower our impact," Lamy said. "Having this plan for the next eight years will provide us with more continuity and a clear call to action."

Some of Emerson's continual climate initiatives to mitigate its carbon footprint include buildings upgraded to environmental standards under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system, composting its food waste, and limiting emissions by supporting the use of public transportation.

The inclusion of student and faculty members in the groups ensures all community members are fairly represented, Lamy said. So far,

the groups have roughly 50 faculty members and a handful of students. Applications are still open.

She believes students are a necessary part of the process in reaching the college's 2030 neutrality goal because of their ability to make the drafted sustainability plan student-approachable. An online suggestion box is open for Emerson community members to provide suggestions for the working groups throughout the fall semester.

"The students [who are] a part of the groups will be really instrumental in helping push the conversation of goals for neutrality going forward," she said. "Everyone who is a part of a working group brings a different point of view."

September's sustainability listening sessions invited participants to share their thoughts on ways Emerson can foster a more sustainable campus. Of the concerns raised by students, Lamy said many asked about waste diversion and a desire for stricter climate initiatives.

According to Lamy, another interest among students is the social impact of climate change. This will

be a focal point for the equity and justice working group, whose main concentration will be defining how climate justice and action on sustainability will affect the local community.

Among those involved in the sustainability working groups, progress to targeting the 2030 goal is shaped through team coordination by the college's stakeholders.

Nejem Raheem, chair of the Marketing Communication department and an environmental economist, is the curriculum and research working group facilitator. Within his role, he is looking to lead efforts to broaden the coordination of sustainability at Emerson.

"I want the groups to demonstrate sustainability and its connection to the environment," Raheem said. "It's like the water we swim in, some people feel it's unrelated to the art we make, but it's all connected."

While Raheem believes that the 2030 neutrality goal is "entirely sensible," he said identifying an accountability structure and connecting community members would

ensure change.

"I want to make sure we have an impact and connect those who want to be in on diversity and inclusion," he said.

Students involved in the working groups share similar sentiments of hoping to improve sustainability on campus.

"I hope our group will represent the diverse community of Emerson's needs with more sustainable practices and continue to make progress towards Emerson being carbon-neutral," said Avani Lefcowitz, a freshman communication sciences and disorders major who is part of the equity and justice group.

Lefcowitz joined the working group to further environmental practices on an urban campus. Her goals for the plan include making the dining hall more sustainable and "uplifting underrepresented students" through sustainability.

Abigail Arsenault, a sophomore creative writing major who is a part of the waste working group, said she wants to address the environmental issue of excess waste produced on campus.

"I hope to accomplish [the 2030 goal] by defining strategies to decrease waste and increase recycling and composting practices with my working group," Arsenault said.

The finalized plan will be implemented in the summer of 2023. Each spring, Lamy will prepare an annual report on the college's progress and make necessary adjustments to the plan, according to the Sustainability Action Plan webpage.

Lamy said the trajectory of achieving a carbon-neutral campus by 2030 is a reasonable strength in the Sustainability Action Plan, especially with the aid of the working groups.

"We can be ambitious at this point," she said. "I am looking forward to setting these goals with stakeholders across the college."

Regular updates on the draft will be provided on the Sustainable Emerson blog and in the monthly Sustainable Emerson newsletter.



# A celebration of light in the face of darkness

Cont. from Pg. 1

cause Emerson does not have an organization for South Asian students. However, Chand is part of a group working to create such an organization.

Both Rajesh and Chand noted the challenges of being South Asian international students at Emerson, Rajesh being from Dubai and Chand from Nepal. Chand in particular remembers feeling lost without a collective space for other South Asian students at Emerson.

“I remember when I first came to Emerson, I saw another guy who looked like me,” he said. “He told me there are more of us out there, and I know we could do so much more in the community if we had a collective identity.”

Last year, Chand and other SGA members hosted a small Diwali celebration at Emerson. After the event, Chand texted his friend who is South Asian and graduated from Emerson the year before.

“My friend was almost in tears,” Chand said. “He said he wished something like that had existed for him when he was at Emerson.”

As Chand continues to push for the establishment of a South Asian student organization, he hopes it can become a safe space for students. While the main focus is uniting other South Asian students, both Chand and Rajesh want the rest of the student body to feel welcome to learn more about South Asian culture and religion.

As an SGA Spiritual Life senator, one of Rajesh’s goals is to make Emerson a safe space to be curious about religion.

“Religion can feel like a taboo subject,” she said, “but people usually aren’t offended if you ask questions to understand someone’s religion better.”

Chand emphasized that the most important thing when it comes to educating yourself is to be respectful. “Incorporating diversity is all about accepting other cultures,” he said.

With this in mind, Chand en-

courages students of all backgrounds to explore different religions during their time at Emerson. He believes the freedom to do so is one of the best parts of attending college.

On Oct. 27, SGA will be partnering with other Emerson organizations, including the Center for Spiritual Life, to host a Diwali dinner and Bollywood dance performance in the Student Performance Center Blackbox in the Little Building. This event will be open to the entire community, and anyone who wishes to attend is welcome.

“Diwali is a reason to have fun, take a break, and rejuvenate,” Chand said. “If we’re able to share that, why not?”

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Illustration Rachel Choi



Decorated diyas. / Courtesy

## ‘We need to do more’: diversity within Emerson and the class of ‘26

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Conversations surrounding racial and economic disparity within the Emerson community followed a series of mandatory meetings hosted by Emerson’s Division of Student Affairs and the Social Justice Center in the Little Building.

The meetings were held after a note containing racial and homophobic slurs was found on a staff member’s office door, made public by an email from the Department of Housing and Residential Education on Sept. 27.

Emerson College remains a primarily white institution with most students falling into higher socioeconomic groups. According to a 2017 New York Times article, the median family income of an Emerson student is \$147,900, with 64% of students coming from the top 20% of American earners.

In 2022 data shared by the college, 54.8% of this year’s incoming freshmen are caucasian and only 14.3% are Pell Grant-eligible. Ranking seventh in US News and World Report’s Best Regional Universities (North), the college also ranked sixth in Princeton Review’s “Financial Aid Not So Great” as well as 476th out of the 1,983 schools ranked in CollegeRaptor’s 2023 college diversity statistics.

Despite these demographics, according to Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Justin Sharifipour, diversity within Emerson is improving.

“I think, historically, the [industries] that we teach have had barriers to students of color and people of lower incomes,” Sharifipour said. “We are trying to fight against patterns and trends that have existed for many years. To that effect, we’re actually getting a reversal [of trends] from those industries.”

Compared to 2020 data, the number of white first-year students has decreased by about 2% in 2022, while all other racial categories—excluding a 1.1% drop in Hispanic students—increased.

“As someone who is Latina, there is a good variety of Latin[x] people [at Emerson],” said first-year student Natalia Suarez. Cultural groups like AMIGOS, a Latinx-culture campus organization, enhance the identities of every Emerson student, Suarez said.

Will Perino, a first-year visual and media arts major, said he feels loved and accepted in his identity as a gay man at Emerson. Emerson is regarded as an LGBTQ-friendly institution, earning a spot on the Princeton Review’s Top 25 Most LGBTQ-Friendly Colleges.

“To my knowledge, Emerson is a very inclusive campus,” said Perino. “There’s a lot of groups for different people.”

While some members of the Emerson

community feel represented, others are acutely aware of the gaps in inclusion on campus.

First-year theater and performance major Mah Camara noticed a stark contrast between the demographics of the Student of Color Pre-Orientation and her classes. Camara noted she was the only Black person in some of her classrooms, adding that her integration into the general student body exacerbated the lack of diversity on campus.

“It’s hard to discuss diversity when you are the only person of your background there,” she said. “It’s uncomfortable being the only Black person in class.”

Charly Pena, a first-year communication sciences and disorders major, said being surrounded by white, wealthy students made her feel alienated as a first-generation, low-income, Afro-Latina student. Her identity only added to the pressures of college, making her feel as if she must outperform students facing fewer obstacles because “so much is at stake”. Pena’s peers are figuring themselves out and enjoying college culture, relishing in time she can’t afford to waste.

“I don’t think I was ever aware of my race and my ethnicity more than I am now,” Pena said.

Not only does she bear the weight of academic prowess and involvement, Pena’s non-marginalized classmates look to her for answers regarding issues pertaining to her intersectional identities, seeking unnecessary vulnerability.

“It puts a lot of pressure on people of color to not only fight with [class expectations], but also have to educate people constantly,” she said.

Despite faculty efforts to maintain rapport, according to Financial Wellness Director Carol Smolinsky, many Emerson students in marginalized communities feel disconnected from campus offices and are wary to ask for support.

Pena reported feeling “uncomfortable” with alleged off-hand comments made at her in the Financial Aid Office.

“I was talking with a [Financial Aid officer] and the microaggressions really started to come out,” Pena said. “He was like, ‘you probably don’t even understand what I’m saying.’”

During the meeting, Pena alleges, the financial aid officer seemed hesitant about her goals of becoming a speech language pathologist because it requires a graduate degree. She claims he underestimated her understanding of her career goals and the financial requirements it would take to get there, noting her family’s financial situation.

Smolinsky says staff in the Admissions and Financial Aid departments have been analyzing what internal changes can be made while also working to improve accessibility and communication with students. Additionally, the Financial Aid department has been working with the Anti-Racism Collaborative to receive training and education.

Smolinsky did not address any specific complaints but said she values when students hold their faculty and staff accountable.

“That is something I appreciate with Emerson,” Smolinsky said. “When students feel something is wrong, they love this place enough to say something.”

Emerson offers a variety of support and programs for all communities, including Emerson’s Creative Circle Scholars Program, a new program that gives 10 Pell-eligible first-year students full ride scholarships and substantial funding to transfer students for their entire time at Emerson. Many of the 2022 first-years who received the CCSP funds were first-generation students, according to Sharifipour.

Emerson also offers additional resources to first-generation students and low-income students. Smolinsky pointed toward the college’s Money Matters program, an initiative that provides all students one-on-one financial counseling and financial literacy workshops. Emerson also partners with iGrad, a hub with

resources to help students understand loans, learn to budget, and receive curated financial advice and planning.

In addition to financial support, Emerson connects students of color with a variety of offices designated for their needs. The Office of Intercultural Student Affairs offers space and support for all cultural student organizations, along with promoting diversity and equity through training courses.

The Office of International Student Affairs helps international students satisfy immigration and legal requirements and ensures they receive the emotional support necessary to live in a different country. The Social Justice Center works to support students of color and international students, and includes the Healing and Advocacy Collective and outreach for victims of identity-based harm.

“We are working to change in a way that supports the students who are here and acknowledge the discomfort they may feel because they’re trying to exist in a space that was not historically for them,” Smolinsky said.

Smolinsky is passionate about supporting students from marginalized communities, especially after those students are accepted into Emerson. She believes staff should prioritize active outreach to foster a community that encourages diversity.

“We need to make sure that if that door is wide open, we’re delivering on that [support] on the back end when [marginalized students] are here,” she said.

Both Sharifipour and Smolinsky not only remain hopeful for the incoming class, but for future generations of Emerson students.

“There’s more to be done. Anyone who says we are satisfied with it, we’re not,” Sharifipour said. “We want to do more. We need to do more.”

Meg Richards contributed to the reporting of this article.



Illustration Rachel Choi

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# Opinion

## Emerson College presents: a convincing performance of inclusivity

Editorial Board

Emerson has a fetish for marginalized communities—but it does not make itself accessible to them. And with a price tag so expensive, it is impossible for Emerson to achieve the diverse environment it advertises, given its ignorance of systemic disproportionalities in race and wealth.

It's no secret that much of America's wealth is disproportionately distributed. The wealth gap in the U.S. divides socio-economically-marginalized communities from the privileged class. Throughout history, those communities that do not fit the "founding father image" are more likely to have low-income status.

Private universities are a perfect case study. In 2017, The New York Times reported that at 38 prestigious—and mostly private—higher education institutions in America, more students came from the top one percent of the income scale than from the entire bottom 60 percent.

Where does Emerson fit into this? According to the Times, most low-income students in private or selective schools leave their educational institutions and fare almost as well as rich students. But that is not the case at Emerson. The communities Emerson not only desperately wants, but also falsely advertises to embrace, are simply unable to afford the astronomical price tag.

A New York Times survey found that 3.2 percent of Emerson College's class of 2013 came from families that make about \$20,000 or less per year and only 27 percent are likely to become a part of the top 5 percent. An Emerson student's median income 10 years after graduation is around \$50,000 annually, which is underwhelming when you consider the college's current tuition price of \$52,190.

During the 2020-21 academic year, Emerson only met 9.4 percent of need-

based financial aid, even though 63.3 percent of students applied for financial aid. Approximately 52 percent of students took out loans that year averaging up to \$49,924 over four years, according to College Factual. The average debt is close to the average starting salary of Emerson students who graduate with a bachelor's degree, costing around \$39,000 a year.

Emerson's lofty price tag makes the institution virtually inaccessible for people without generational wealth. As a result, students receive an experience tainted by affluence.

Students come to Emerson in pursuit of liberal arts education, and we're taught to work as creatives who amplify the voices of marginalized communities. Rarely do members of these communities make up more than a small percentage of each class. In 2021, the Emerson student body was 58 percent caucasian, 13 percent international, 12 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian or Pacific Islander and 4 percent African American, according to the college's website.

The few members of these communities that are at Emerson are often forced to listen to their more privileged peers poorly analyze content in classes like African American History or Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East, while they get by without any real stakes in the matter.

These situations are a tangible perpetuation of the exclusion of people of color from creative spaces, and coincide with the college's wealth disparity—highlighted by annual tuition hikes.

As of March 2022, Emerson increased undergraduate tuition and room and board by 2 percent for the 2022-23 academic year. These increases are not new; the college has raised its tuition incrementally since the 1980s, resulting in

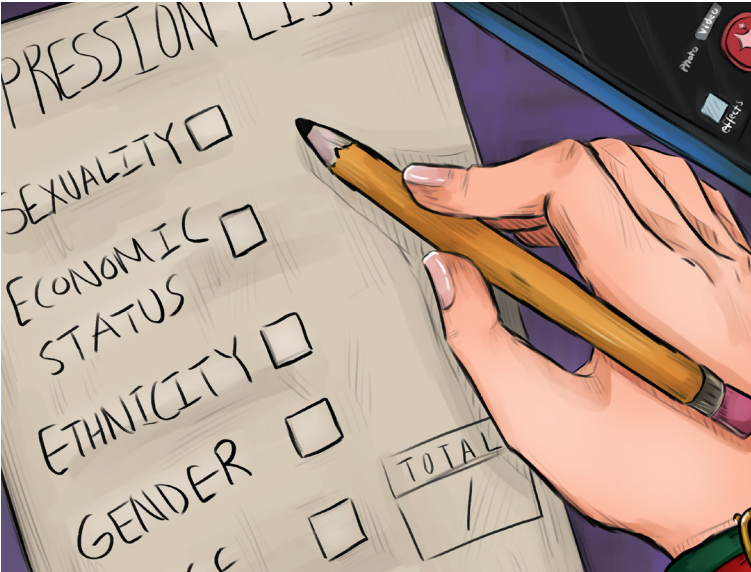


Illustration Rachel Choi

roughly a 56 percent increase between 2012 and 2022.

Protests and petitions circulated the campus in response to administration's most recent hike, with many students demanding fiscal transparency through an annual financial town hall, improved financial aid resources, and increased student involvement in financial decisions.

Time and time again, these hikes are met with resistance from students—resistance that is ultimately futile. Low-income students are forced to swallow their Emerson pride and pay up, largely because the majority of their peers—or their parents—can.

The Times study reported the median household income of an Emerson student was \$147,900 annually. The study also found that 64 percent of Emerson students came from the top 20 percent of income earners, with 8.3 percent belonging

to the top 1 percent.

In the 2018-19 academic year, families who earned between \$75,000 and \$100,000 annually paid the college around \$42,458 in net price—the average cost remaining after financial aid—while families earning \$30,000 or less paid a net price of \$39,241.

Who has the privilege to pursue a creative degree without fear of financial instability? The financially privileged. If you are attending a post-secondary institution for creative- or communication-based enterprises, you are most likely doing so with the knowledge that the road to commercial or monetary success will be paved with financial instability.

In a school utterly rampant with the affluent, the stakes for success have already fallen only as low as the cushion generational or familial wealth creates. Just as the wealthy receive the privilege to attend

a college or university for a creative passion, they also receive the privilege of academic mediocrity or failure with little financial or social repercussions.

What does it mean to belong to an institution that boasts inclusion of all kinds in its advertisement and curriculum, but fails to reflect that in its community?

Will Emerson ever put its money where its mouth is and make way for the inclusivity it so boldly advertises? Is it possible for low-income, underrepresented students to level the playing field muddled by privilege?

Many private colleges and universities ask the same question and attempt to create spaces where students beyond the white and affluent can thrive in prestigious post-secondary institutions.

Princeton University developed a tuition-free college preparatory program for high school students from underrepresented socioeconomic and cultural groups in Mercer County, New Jersey. Students apply in the spring of their freshman year and, once accepted, spend three summers on Princeton's campus preparing for admission to and success within selective colleges and universities.

The Educational Testing Service evaluated Princeton's program and found nearly 70 percent of the program's alumni consistently graduate from competitive colleges and universities. According to ETS, the more competitive the college or university, the higher the likelihood that low-income students will graduate and earn better incomes.

The real question students should ask is what resources Emerson provides to ensure not only the admission, but long-term success of underrepresented students?

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## When it comes to durian, spitters are quitters

Bryan Liu  
Beacon Staff

Durian is an acquired taste—a taste westerners can't seem to acquire, so they make fun of it on the internet. The stinky "king of fruits" endemic to southeast Asia has found its niche in the sub-genre of youtube clickbait...as a punchline.

And by 'stinky' I mean stinky. I mean it's so foul it's provocative. In "DURIAN FRUIT vs ANGRY GRANDPA" by TheAngryGrandpaShow, the titular senior citizen bludgeoned the spiky fruit with a variety of swords after his family pranked him into eating it. The video tallied 5.5 million views.

Similarly, Coyote Peterson's video "MOST DISGUSTING FOOD EVER" garnered 7.4 million views after he retched and spit chunks of the fruit into a trash can. These clips, along with hundreds of other late-night bits and amateur footage, always feature an American gagging through their first time trying durian.

Durian hate is real.

In these reviews, it's hard to separate truth from theatrics, but to me the truth has always been undeniable: durian is delicious. It feels like summer. It tastes like sweetness. The texture is creamy enough to melt in your mouth: durian slaps harder than Will Smith. It can be fried, frozen, mixed in desserts like mochi or ice cream, or served as is. In east-Asian countries, durian is beloved for its taste and aroma. Although some countries have banned it from hotels and public transportation because of its distinct scent, I would argue the smell



Illustration Hailey Akau

is an essential part of the experience.

Durian only sucks when we try to quantify it through the Western palate, —and it's pretty obvious that the Western palate can't fathom the flavor of durian.

For example, durian enthusiast Lindsay Gasik, who runs the blog "Year of The Durian," describes the fruit as having "subtle hints of chives mixed with powdered sugar. It's supposed to taste like diced garlic and caramel poured into whipped cream." What. The. Fuck?

It tickles me when Western cuisine tries to quantify durian by comparing it to familiar Western flavors because there's just nothing like it. Any attempt to do so results in farcical absurdity. "The Oxford Companion to Food," an encyclopedia of global cuisine, offers

the testimony of a tourist in Indonesia who declared that eating the fruit "was not much different from having to consume used surgical swabs," after comparing the taste to "sewage, stale vomit, onions, and cheese." Don't think about it, just trust me. Durian isn't bad: it's just different.

It's reductive to interpret Asian tastes through the Western lens. We, —the Asian community, —welcome chefs

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like Anthony Bourdain and Gordon Ramsay to come and cook our dishes, work in our restaurants, and prepare our ingredients. But in the process, we are often forced to the background in favor of the presenter—the white savior who brings their own Western point of view to our distinct, Eastern world.

We may gain representation, but at the cost of no longer being the protagonists of our own stories. The Bourdain/Ramsay-figure still remains the patron saint of American food writers.

"Even when he's sucking down noodles in Hanoi or exploring the back alleys of Yangon, [Bourdain] is the white savior centering the story, and his gaze is paramount," wrote food critic Chawadee Nualkhair in her blog the Bangkok Glutton. Despite the praise and fanfare directed at different cultures, he is still the hero.

Bourdain was the best—I'm not disputing that; I grew up with him, too. However, his work presents Asian food as a submissive foil to Western cuisine, especially with the advent of Asian fusion restaurants that assimilate Asian food to the Western palate. Critics will praise eateries for marketing themselves as "adventurous" after cooking with an obscure ingredient or

"modernizing" traditional recipes.

Eating Asian food 'raises' the social capital of the Western consumer and 'reduces' the value of its origin—which is why Americans love to eat durian like an extreme sport on YouTube. It perpetuates the narrative that durian sucks. Because its spiky "Asianness" and exotic flavor threaten the Western world's conception of food. Because we want to watch "Asianness" and exotic flavors continue to be hated for entertainment.

The nature of Asian food in America will always cater to a white audience—Chinese food changed to be more American. But the complex Asian American diaspora is so much more than cheap takeout; our food deserves fine-dining status. That's why durian needs to be respected. Durian has to remain stinky and spiky because we all are.

We must embrace durian's "Asianness" because I swear, there is nothing sweeter than coming to terms with another culture in all of its beauty and complexity.

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# Ethics aside, the death penalty is legal. Why don't we use it?

Sophia Pargas  
*Beacon Staff*

On Feb. 14, 2018, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School didn't just gather for a normal day—they gathered for an extraordinary one.

Luke Hoyer awoke to a Valentine's Day gift from his mother, which he left on his bed as he rushed out for school. The candy and card would stay there for over a year; he never returned from school to claim them.

Joaquin Oliver had finally asked the girl he loved to be his girlfriend, and wrote her love letters in his creative writing class—the last he would ever attend. When police collected his body from the hallway, these same letters were found pinned to his jacket, smeared in blood. In trial, his girlfriend shed tears over never having gotten to receive them.

Nick Dworet spent his last moments celebrating a correct answer in his Jewish History class. His teacher recalled that it was barely seconds later that an AR-15 broke through the doorway, and he was instantly shot and killed at his desk.

Almost five years after the merciless massacre of 17 students and teachers—and four months into a grueling trial—the gunman who killed Hoyer, Oliver, Dworet and 14 others has been granted life in prison and thus spared from the death penalty.

This trial should not be a talking point for pro-versus-anti death penalty agendas. It should not be a case of nature versus nurture, or a heroic exemplification of democracy at work. In fact, it should be the very opposite.

The debate of whether the death penalty is fair could carry on until the end of time. We can sling “an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind” or “the punishment fits the crime” until our arms fall off, but as long as the sentence remains in place, these opinions remain irrelevant.

The fact of the matter is that the death penalty is on the table in many states, Florida being one of them. Our justice system proposes death as the ultimate

punishment—and there is no person more deserving of the ultimate punishment than Nikolas Cruz.

The fact that a 19-year-old man can strategically and meticulously calculate the slaying of 17 lives and face anything less than the capital sentence is both unbelievable and downright deplorable.

During the trial, the prosecution revealed thousands of the gunman's internet searches inquiring how to carry out mass murder, posts detailing his desires to “make parents suffer,” and videos very clearly outlining his intent to end as many innocent lives in the most gory way possible. It was also revealed that the AR-15 he used to carry out the attack was purchased over a year in advance of the crime, and his intent for the weapon was clear from the beginning.

In the months, days, and hours leading up to the attack, the gunman plotted his killing spree and anticipated the fame he would garner as a result. He knew what he was doing when he walked into that school. He had a plan, and he fulfilled it.

All of this information was revealed to a jury of 12 over the course of four months. Most days, the courtroom was filled with friends and family of the victims. Many parents sat through almost every single day of the court proceedings.

They watched every police testimony, every coroner's finding, and every victim impact statement. They listened as police described the carnage of the 1200 building, as coroners detailed the disfigurement of the 17, and as fellow families expounded the torment of losing a loved one to such a horrific crime. They watched as the gunman sat, unphased, scribbling on a notepad and fiddling with his mask carelessly day after day.

Even worse, the families had to sit and silently listen as the man who murdered their loved ones was painted as a victim. The defense argued that the gunman was a product of a broken home, a victim to the tragedies life bestowed upon him. Most of their argument was founded on the fact that the gunman had familial traumas and did not know better than to pur-



Illustration Rachel Choi

chase a weapon, plan a mass murder, and execute it to maximum destruction.

In truth, the murderer is just another entitled white man who evaded all accountability before, during, and after his crime. He was exempted by the FBI following threats he made online just a month before the shooting, was served McDonalds and arrested peacefully mere hours after carrying out the massacre, and has now been granted mercy despite having earned exactly the opposite.

In the wake of the decision, death penalty debate arises once more. Some say death is the only just punishment and anything less is a failure of our system. Others say life in prison is the ultimate sentence—a seal on the gunman's fate of a miserable, tormented existence.

But the killer has not been stripped of any chance at happiness. He can find joy in the sunlight, in sound sleep or peaceful dreams, in pages of books or scenes of movies, in the very fact that he has yet another day of life to spend, and another one after, and after again.

This is more than any one of his victims can say. The gunman may be behind bars, but the victims' loved ones are the ones who are truly suffering for his offenses.

The gunman will live out his life knowing he got away with the best possible outcome: another shot at a life he took from so many.

This decision should cause outrage, uproar, and unrest. The murderer's presence on this earth is a reminder that evil exists, and there are faulty systems which need to be revolutionized not only to prevent such crimes from happening, but to universalize punishments for such criminals.

Because this is exactly what happened. Countless systems failed the victims time and time again, crumbling under the pressure of addressing real, imminent danger in our society.

Law enforcement ignored violent and erratic behavior throughout the gunman's entire life, despite a long history of calls from friends and family. The Florida Department of Children and Families concluded he was not a risk to himself or others just two years before the attack despite the previous threats he made online. The FBI failed to follow proper protocol after receiving a tip revealing the murderer's online comment, “I'm going to be a professional school shooter.” They failed again just weeks later when they dis-

missed a person close to the gunman who specifically detailed the gunman's desire to kill and revealed the likelihood that he would soon conduct a school shooting.

And now, five years later, yet another system has failed. This is the same system which sentences criminals to death for much less: treason, drug trafficking, espionage, assault and rape. Murderers involving less victims, less gore and less calculation than this gunman have received the death penalty, many of them unshockingly being part of marginalized communities. The justice system picks and chooses who will truly face the capital punishment, thus abandoning all uniformity and actively condoning oppression.

The death penalty was designed to be the ultimate punishment for the most heinous, unthinkable of crimes, and yet the most heinous, unthinkable criminal has eluded it.

As long as this unjust criminal system is upheld, the death penalty should cease to be viewed as something untouchable and instead be seen as what it is: a legal consequence whose ethical implication is currently irrelevant. If the death penalty will not be used for such a horrific massacre, it should not be used at all.

To subject families to such a grueling trial only to rule in favor of the murderer is utterly inhumane. The gunman's sentencing of anything less than the capital sentence is a slap in the face, not only to the victims and their loved ones in Parkland, but to every gun violence victim who has yet to receive justice.

What our legal system has offered is a challenge and an invitation for the next mass killer to push the boundaries just a little bit more. If this didn't earn the death penalty, what will? Undoubtedly, it will not be long until someone takes it upon themselves to find out. And even then, our justice system will inevitably fail to put an end to this absurd cycle and stand by the punishment they allow to remain in place.

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# Some friendships are disposable—and that's okay.

Margarita Ivanova  
*Beacon Staff*

Do you ever pass by the people you once laughed through packs of Pale Ales with, and now approach them with casual gestures and seemingly meaningless small talk? What changed? you may think to yourself. It can be bitter-sweet — seeing the living remnants of your memories and dwelling on the lost time that led to drifting.

In most circumstances, it's something as simple as a change in your environment that causes a fall out. As college students, these changes are inevitable. Whether you switch dorms, decide to live off campus, study abroad, switch majors, or stop going to parties, the people you surround yourself with are constantly changing, and it can be easy to label these simple changes as losses.

Sophia Kriegal, a senior writing, literature, and publishing major, studied abroad in the Netherlands during the Spring 2022 semester, and experienced several, sudden social changes in addition to the nine-hour time difference.

“It's interesting because I went to the castle literally knowing nobody, and now I'm dating someone from there, but in terms of the other friendships I formed there, it's really strange because I don't really talk to them,” she said. “There's not enough time to hang out with everyone, so it's just a matter of really picking your players.”

Kriegal, who came back to best friends in Boston she hadn't seen in months, had to prioritize restoring those relationships over maintaining the new ones formed in Kasteel Well.

“You expect to come back to Boston where everything is the same, but it turned out that so much actually happened while we were gone,” she said. “So much happens when you're away and it feels like you're here for the aftermath.”



Courtesy Margarita Ivanova

Kriegal talked about how some of her more casual friendships in Boston, and the Netherlands especially, wilted away during these shifts in setting.

“There were so many outer friendships who I don't really text and just see them on social media,” she said. “I give them hugs and say ‘hi’ at parties but when you put a pause on reality and show up six months later, it's kind of easier to just breeze by and not really interact.”

Kriegal said social exhaustion is a leading factor for the quick waves, short head nods, and an excuse to run off.

“I am also very different from the last time I saw these people [acquaintances in Boston] so it's weird finding a place for them to fit,” she said.

Studies show that building friendships really does take time. It is estimated that it takes between 40 to 60 hours to form a casual friendship, 80 to 100 hours to transition to being a friend, and more than 200 hours together to become good friends. Returning to newer friendships that you've invested less energy in after significant time apart isn't always realistic.

Sometimes, a setting can really be the only factor that knits a connection. Your setting, and the consistency of it, both play a crucial role in forming relationships. In a series of studies done in the 1990s, researchers found the major factors outside of human behavior that affected friendships were living arrangements, opportunities to spend time together, proximity types of educational setting, emotional climate, and family setting.

“As much as I wish I had more in common with some people, the only thing I really had in common with a lot of them was being in a completely foreign place with a small group, and one pub,” Kriegal said. “Coming back now, it's interesting seeing everyone in their normal settings and seeing if they're similar or different, or if you are even compatible in ways. Sometimes I do feel sad that once summer happened, a lot of those friendships kind of just dissolved.”

Kriegal compared the drift with the students she met abroad to the transition out of dorms — where a majority of us don't really see the people we lived on the same floor with after our first year. She used another example about the initial enthusiastic obsessions of first year party culture, saying that when the sports houses stopped having parties, there were many of those individuals who she completely stopped interacting with.

So, why do we cling onto these friendships even though they have shifted into mere acquaintances? Why do we make empty promises in passing, and offer statements molded into hang-outs that feel more like a task? We lie to ourselves because we're afraid of the realization that a bond can be severed, or that we might be the reason it doesn't last.

“When you get back to your normal

settings, you check in every once in a while, and I even find myself texting people, ‘Oh my god I miss you so much, I hope everything is good,’ and it feels fake to me,” Kriegal said. “I often feel guilty for saying ‘wow we have to do something soon,’ even though, yes, I want to see those people, but I know that there's just not gonna be enough time in the day to see everyone.”

Kriegal said that moving past the aggressive need to constantly surround herself with people and social experiences is a part of the last couple years of shifting into adulthood.

“I've honestly reached a point where I'm pretty content with the people I've got,” she said.

Although a majority of people do hesitate with leaving relationships behind, it can be easier for others like Sharon Boateng, a senior journalism student, who grew up constantly moving around between Ghana, Nigeria, and the United States.

“Friendships for me personally are very temporary, and it's something I'm used to,” Boateng said. “The same way I move around from place to place is the same way I move on from person to person; and it has its advantages and disadvantages for sure.”

This mindset translated into her college years as well, where many friendships were built solely based on conditional proximity.

“I knew people that revolved around the activities we would do, but a majority of those friends I couldn't actually relate to outside of that,” she said. “I realized that once I stopped attending those organizations, and once the group projects were over, there was no consistency in the friendship — there was nothing to talk about when we saw each other. There was nothing to look forward to because again we had different sides of our lives and we had different

interests.”

People fear letting go of friendships, and especially letting go of things that bring them a sense of comfort. It's in our nature to hold onto those we associate with good experiences.

After seeing the people you once belly-laughed with, you think about how you really should reach out for that cup of Tatte coffee and spew out the same nonsense every week saying you miss them with each awkward moment in passing — but what happens if you simply stop?

You realize, maybe we really aren't the same, but it was good while it lasted, and you soon lose sight of the empty promises. Your memories are nothing but treasures locked inside a box of nostalgia, waiting to be opened by the empty reassurance that you give yourself, or by a healthier set of reflections.

In reality, we don't have to pile layers of glitter onto the boxes of memories. Sometimes it can just feel good to leave the memories locked inside, and open them every once in a while to reminisce.

Why force a relationship to continue when you can think back on the magic? Good things aren't always made to last, and sometimes we need to let go.

To a population that dwells on greed and accumulating elements for success in the future, it is often difficult to understand that less of something can make us happier. Why push something until it falls apart, rather than simply reflecting on the bliss?

Pass by those people that made you feel like you were young forever, and cherish what you had, rather than dwelling on the stability of these relationships in the future and what you could be missing out on.

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# Living Arts

## Alum's debut feature 'Ham on Rye' follows the journey of leaving home

Ethan Cotler  
Beacon Correspondent

An Emerson alum's indie drama debut film follows a group of teenagers on their journey away from home, exploring society's expectations of young adults.

From the mind of filmmaker Tyler Taormina comes the offbeat film "Ham on Rye," released in 2019 and showcased in the Bright Lights Film Series on Oct. 12.

"Ham on Rye" follows a young ensemble cast's trek to a local deli, Monty's, where they engage in a small town's annual coming-of-age tradition: an event of music, awkward small talk, and a glowing white ball. The night ends with some teenagers staying behind in the small town while others who found a partner vanish—literally—into the horizon line, never to be seen on screen again. The kids left in their hometown continue their lives with an air of loneliness and FOMO regarding the life beyond their hometown they never lived.

The film opens with three young women getting ready for the event at Monty's, with the lead, Haley, played by Haley Bodell. The friends make their way to the deli, discussing their potential futures. Two secure a partner and leave their hometown, but Bodell is left behind. She is bewildered and isolated for the rest of the film, exemplified in a scene where she and her family attempt to contact her older brother, who is away in college and barely pays mind to their questions.

The second half explores her coming to terms with being stuck, paralleled with Sloan, played by Cole Devine. A chef at Monty's, Sloan is a jaded, college-aged man still stuck in his hometown, getting up to pranks and drugs when he's not at work.

"Ham on Rye" centering on young people should be no surprise for those who know Taormina's career.



Still from "Ham on Rye." / Courtesy Matt Grady

Taormina went to Emerson aspiring to write for children's television. He went on to intern behind-the-scenes of "Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja," a DisneyXD kids' show starring Ben Schwartz. He quickly discovered that this was not an avenue he was interested in exploring further.

"I had to become a filmmaker by necessity, so I can not sit on a table with people and write with comedians but actually tell my own stories," Taormina said. "I just totally fell in love with cinema."

Taormina is a graduate of Emerson Los Angeles and moved out to Los Angeles after college. He got a day job in a restaurant, which paid his rent and kept him afloat. He quit in 2016 and dedicated himself entirely to filmmaking.

"A little bit of discomfort did help me, and I put all my time and energy outside of that day job to make my films," Taormina said. "Once I made my first short film, 'Ham on Rye' became much more of a reality because people saw that I had done

a film before and I actually had good instincts."

Taormina first conceived the story in a jacuzzi with some friends in 2015. When one friend joked about going to a sandwich shop to hook up with someone, Taormina quickly became enthralled with that image.

"I was really drawn to this juxtaposition and its absurdity," Taormina said.

Alum Sergio Uguet de Resayre, a producer on the film, said the film's plot challenges society's perceptions of romantic relationships.

"'Ham on Rye' redefined my understanding of what a film could be since one of its virtues is how it plays with the Hollywoodification of the audience's expectations, shattering them in the process," Uguet said.

Taormina also cited the concept of a "third home" as another reason for his captivation with "Ham on Rye."

The first home Taormina defines as where one lives, the second where one works, and the third an "extra space."

He described the concept of a third home as a "diminishing reality in the U.S."

"[In the United States] it seems like you need money to access that third space and I think something about that disrupts something in me," Taormina said.

Bodell finds her third space in the last scene of the film, where she lies in a park alone amid a serene calm, gazing at children frolicking in the grass.

"Ham on Rye" is filled with poignant messages, many dealing with the experiences of young people as they explore their identities and goals for the future.

It's about taking the leap from adolescence to adulthood, away from the confines of where one grew up.

In order to actualize Taormina's profound vision, logistics were necessary. Identifying and securing a budget was a crucial step. Taormina detailed on the film review website Letterboxd that funding came from a combination of his own savings and contributions from his close friends

as well as investors, crowdfunding, and even credit card rewards.

Taormina described the process of actualizing his idea to the big screen as long, but not a "baptism in fire." He credited seven of his closest friends, mostly fellow alums like producers Jonathan Davies and Carson Lund, with helping the process run smoothly. He also spoke of the benefits of shooting in Los Angeles, mainly that many are eager to work on meaningful films.

The writing process started when Taormina was 25 and finally premiered theatrically when he was 29. Throughout the four-year operation, prop bins littered his apartment's living room.

"It really gives you the notion that making a film means shedding off all of the comforts of your life, you become prepared to lose everything," Taormina wrote on Letterboxd.

The crew shot "Ham on Rye" for over just 16 days, with approximately 100 actors shot across more than 60 locations. Taormina worked with leading actor Bodell from his 2015 TV show "Suburban Legends."

"It was all so rigorously planned out that it was actually just a very fun time," Taormina said. "Part of that was it's a lot of friends."

Taormina said many film festivals initially rejected "Ham on Rye." It wasn't until a showing at a small festival with an audience of eight people that he met his distributor.

Taormina and the distributor took "Ham on Rye" to Maryland Film Festival, where it was "supremely well-received" and got a positive write-up by the New Yorker's notable film critic Richard Brody. The following year, "Ham on Rye" had its theatrical release.

His most recent film, "Happer's Comet," played at Berlinale in 2022. At the moment, he is concurrently producing his fourth, fifth, and sixth feature films.

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## Enlightening performance on oppression

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As audience members trickled into the gallery, Rojas circled the space, wearing only a blue jumpsuit with the Santa Maria boat replica and the words "go back to where you came from" embroidered in white on the back. The gallery smelled of an earthy aroma, coming from a bundle of sage Rojas was burning while holding a banana in his mouth and shaking a carabiner of keys.

Rojas sat on the floor, covering his face with a large book. He shouted a variety of xenophobic remarks as he ripped the book

page by page. He then went into a lecture on colonialism, the effects of xenophobic behavior, and a retelling of his own experiences with xenophobia. Rojas ended the show by displaying himself in the nude and pouring a jar of maple syrup on himself.

"The whole [performance] was eye-opening to say the least," said Skylar Hutcheon, a freshman communications major. "When he was talking, he went from very serious topics [to] personal anecdotes that made it a little bit lighter. He balanced out the way he wanted to perform and reenact his experience of going through



Courtesy Emilio Rojas

all of this and it was very new and different."

Members outside of the Emerson community also enjoyed the performance. Audience member Amy Coronado said she was eager to watch the performance after hearing about it through a Latinx work group chat on Slack.

"I've never had somebody tell me to go back where I came from, but have been asked, 'Where are you really from? What's your background?'" Coronado said. "I answered [with] what I studied in college, and they [would say] 'No, I meant, where are your parents from?' Having had that experience, I wanted to see what the

artist had to say about it."

Coronado said the performance was an important reminder of colonialism.

"I teared up when [Rojas] said 'I would call this Turtle Island' because that is really deep into the truth of it," she said. "Bringing the [Santa Maria] boat back was a beautiful gesture and showed that [almost nobody] came from here."

"tracing a wound through my body" will be on display until Nov. 6, and Rojas' artwork will be showcased at a variety of locations on Emerson's campus, including Little Building, Iwasaki Library, Bill Bordy Theater, and

the Media Arts Gallery.

ArtsEmerson hopes to have more exhibitions in the coming months that will resonate with the Emerson community and encourage vital conversations about urgent matters.

"As a curator, I'm much more interested in how artists can expand how we think about certain things that are happening in society," Bradbury said, "or how—through the lens of their artwork—[artists] could allow us to think about an issue differently."

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Courtesy Emilio Rojas



# A charming new bookstore opens in Beacon Hill

Rachel Hackam  
*Beacon Correspondent*

In a five-story townhouse on Charles Street, customers can peruse the newly-opened Beacon Hill Books and Cafe. The shop's cool gray walls, warm white lights, and soft background music create a bibliophile's ideal atmosphere. A spiral staircase runs through the building as each unique floor peels off its trail. Blue-and-white striped carpet covers the floors, meeting the slate bookshelves filled with colorful covers.

The birth of this cozy bookstore and cafe came when owner Melissa Fetter returned to Beacon Hill in 2019 after 30 years away. She was surprised to find an absence of bookstores on the Hill. When an old neglected building became available on Charles Street, Fetter didn't hesitate to purchase it in hopes of creating the perfect bookstore.

Although purchased in 2019, the building wasn't ready for customers until October 2022 due to strict renovation regulations from the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission and the city of Boston.

When renovating, Fetter wanted to preserve the original character of the building and enhance the "good bones" of the old townhouse. The layout of the interior remains consistent with the 1800s style, as sitting rooms branch off from the staircase. An elevator was installed to increase accessibility.

"I really wanted to maintain what was appropriate from the historical aspects of the building, but I also wanted to give it a more contemporary feel," Fetter said in an interview with The Beacon.

Beacon Hill Books and Cafe has five floors connected by a spiral staircase. On each floor, cozy reading nooks and specialized rooms branch off, allowing customers ample space to wander through the store. Bookshelves line the perimeter of each room, with tables in the center showcasing popular reads and new releases.

"Bookstores are about the qual-

ity of the books on the shelves, but the space needs to be welcoming," Fetter said. "We want people to make the choice to come in and not do what is convenient and click 'add to cart.'"

Located on Charles Street, Beacon Hill Books and Cafe is only a short walk from Emerson's campus. Sophomore creative writing student Daphne Bryant took advantage of the fall weather and visited the shop.



The fourth floor of Beacon Hill Books and Cafe full of children's literature. / Courtesy Rachel Hackam

"Upon entering, I was immediately intrigued," Bryant said. "It felt like I entered a wonderland, and as I kept climbing the stairs, I found more and more magical nooks and crannies to explore."

The garden level of the store houses the cafe and an outdoor seating area. Space heaters and potted plants surround the tables and chairs.

The street-level entrance brings entering customers to the second

doesn't have any intel on the heist.

Paige spends her days in the Public Gardens, sharing stories with the other squirrels. At night, she reads the children's books, placing an acorn on her favorites for them to be featured at the next storybook hour.

Up the spiral staircase to floor three is the store's fiction collection. In one of the largest sections on the floor, the fiction books are divided into sub-genres, such as

romance and mystery. Also on this floor is a small room with deep red walls dedicated to aesthetics such as design, gardening, and architecture. Images are carved into the bookcases, including engravings of pens, globes, and ink pots.

Another side room houses the "around the world" section, filled with books that would make great reads while in different parts of the world.

The fourth floor is the chil-

different from the one above and below. Sophomore theater and performance student Riley MacMoyle found comfort in the children's section.

"I felt like my inner child was getting to play with the train and the little red door," MacMoyle said.

Although important, the decor is only one part of the bookstore. Upon opening, the owners had the opportunity to curate an entire selection of books. The staff at Beacon Hill Books and Cafe began with a recommended list provided by the distributor. Fetter and her team examined each title, crossing off and adding books to the collection as they went.

"We were building a business while also guessing our client demographics," Fetter said. "As we grow, our customers will help inform our decisions, especially surrounding inventory."

General Operations Manager Irene MacDonald played a large role in curating the collection. MacDoanld interned for several publishers when attending law school in the Boston area. Through these experiences, she discovered the United-Kingdom-based publishing company Persephone Books.

Persephone Books primarily reprints books written by women. MacDonald and Fetter are fans of the company and made it a goal to include them in Beacon Hill Books' collection.

"Our goal has always been to have the book you're looking for and to also have the book you didn't know you were looking for," MacDonald said. "We want to help you find the next book you will fall in love with."

After a long process, Beacon Hill Books opened at the beginning of October, ready to greet literature lovers of all ages.

"Beacon Hill Books is here to serve all of Boston and to share a love of reading with everyone," Fetter said.

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## 'Subject' is a thoughtful meta-examination of the documentary genre

Abigail Lee  
*Beacon Staff*

A documentary recently shown as part of the Bright Lights line up interrogates the ethics of the documentary genre itself.

Directed by Jennifer Tiexiera and Camilla Hall, "Subject" follows the lives of several people who have been subjects in prominent documentaries. Through interviews with these subjects, documentarians, and scholars, the film sets up an ethical debate around the potentially exploitative nature of documentaries.

"Subject" begins by emphasizing Hollywood's recent documentary boom—a sudden increase in the commercial success of the documentary genre in recent years. Documentaries are churned out each year, gaining millions of viewers.

The genre's allure often comes from its ability to pull engrossing narratives out of everyday material. But what do documentarians owe their subjects, whose stories are the basis of their work? Moreover, can any subject truly be prepared for the lasting effects a documentary has on their life in the months and years after it premieres?

The film compellingly wrestles with these questions and provides various viewpoints. Some documentary subjects like Arthur Agee, featured in the 1994 film "Hoop Dreams," look

back on their experience with positive feelings.

On the other hand, Margie Ratliff, a subject in the 2004 series "The Staircase," still deals with the invasion of privacy from the public's ongoing interest in a traumatic part of her past.

Others face more mixed outcomes. Ahmed Hassan was able to reveal the political realities of Egypt as a subject in 2013's "The Square," but the exposure led to threats to his safety.

The experts in the film also have differing opinions; some argue it's necessary to compensate subjects for the time and stories they contribute, while others say this sets the stage for dramatic manipulation, making subjects more like actors.

Tiexiera and Hall deftly layer these contrasting perspectives, while also building a subtle argument for the establishment of ethical standards and guidelines within documentary filmmaking. They provide primers on the major ethical considerations like racial sensitivity and power dynamics on set, but don't settle on hard conclusions.

Instead, they allow the audience to ponder the questions as much as the interviewees. If anything, the filmmakers argue for the proliferation of these kinds of conversations within the industry.

The filmmakers made the smart move of not requiring audiences to



Post-screening discussion for "Subject" with Jennifer Tiexiera and Camilla Hall. / Courtesy Anna Feder

have seen the documentaries discussed to understand their relevance. Tiexiera and Hall give a rundown of each documentary and incorporate brief footage from each. The juxtaposition of that footage and the interviews with the subjects is one of the most intriguing elements of "Subject."

This tactic extracts the former subjects from the narrative confines of the documentaries through which they were publicized. Out of the

frame of a compact dramatic arc, the subjects become real people—not just actors or characters. This realization itself poses a question about how documentary subjects remain static in our cultural memory.

In a virtual Q&A after the screening, Tiexiera explained that she refers to the subjects in the film as "participants" instead, and that they were brought on as co-producers so they could have a say in their representation. This reframing underscores the

need for a wider evaluation of the genre and provides a glimpse of what new ethical frameworks could look like.

"Subject" offers an efficient and comprehensive first step, setting the stage for such a change. Whatever answers to these ethical dilemmas audiences find, the questions are undeniably haunting.

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# Sports

## Bruins on Boylston: New system yields rewards and creates problems

Leo Kagan  
*Beacon Staff*

Former Bruins Head Coach Bruce Cassidy was not who fans would've expected to be fired last summer. If anyone, it would've been General Manager Don Sweeney, whose questionable drafting and trade deadline additions failed to earn the team a Stanley Cup.

So when the pink slip got handed to Cassidy and the pen to Sweeney, who signed a multi-year extension, many were surprised. However, fans embraced their new coach, Jim Montgomery, as an adequate replacement.

When a new coach joins a team, they bring their own system, and Montgomery hasn't been shy about his desire to improve some aspects of the Bruins' play through all three zones. Bolstering the offense is a priority, though not at the cost of their historically strong defense.

The Bruins, however, have yet to reach the equilibrium Montgomery's looking for.

### Offense

So far, the Bruins are generating more offense this season than last year. Through four games—an admittedly small sample size—the Bruins scored an average of 5.25 goals per game, a marked improvement from last season's 3.09 average.

Not only has the sheer volume of goals improved, but also the variety of goal-scorers. Through four games, two goals came from defensemen, 12 from top-six forwards, and seven from the bottom-six.

The B's are a one-line team no more, as offensive weapons are distributed throughout the lineup, clouding who deserves the title of "top line" for the first time in a while.

Though new Head Coach Jim Montgomery hasn't hesitated to juggle line combinations, the top six forwards have generally been right-winger David Pastrnak, left-wingers Taylor Hall and Jake DeBrusk, and centers David Krejci, Pavel Zacha, and Patrice



Courtesy Creative Commons

Bergeron.

With Bergeron and Krejci anchoring each of the team's top two lines, it's hard to tell which line is the bigger offensive weapon. Krejci has typically had Pastrnak, an all-world goalscorer, on his right flank and Zacha on his left, while Bergeron has the speedy duo of Hall and DeBrusk on his wings.

The Bruins have experimented with breaking up the "Perfection Line" of Pastrnak, Bergeron, and left winger Brad Marchand for years, but found success last season with former Bruins center Erik Haula and Hall skating alongside Pastrnak on the second unit. Splitting up the team's best offensive weapons continues to work—despite some new and returning faces in the top-six—which bodes well for the Bruins' offensive success.

The resurgence of left-winger Nick Foligno and center Trent Frederic, each of whom fared poorly in the 2021-22 season, has super-charged the Bruins' bottom-six, contributing to the explosion of offense.

Foligno matched last year's goal total—two—in the first four games of this season. He looks faster, physically engaged, and impactful on the forecheck. But Foligno is still under pressure from younger, cheaper options, like centers Jakub Lauko and Jack Studnicka, gunning for his spot in

the lineup, though he is winning the battle for a roster spot so far.

Since I called Frederic the Bruins' worst player in the team's pre-season finale on Oct. 8, his game has drastically improved. After being scratched for the regular season opener, the scrappy young forward found his way back into the lineup when DeBrusk fell to injury. Despite Debrusk's return to the starting forward group on Monday, Frederic remained in the lineup off the strength of a good performance against the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday.

Unsuccessful in last year's playoffs against the Carolina Hurricanes team who were dominant in suffocating their opponents on the forecheck, this year's Bruins look improved in this department, forcing goals off the forecheck—like the one Frederic assisted on Saturday.

Newcomer left winger A.J. Greer has proven to be one such effective forechecker, scoring twice against the Coyotes and collecting five points already. He brings the hard-working attitude and physicality Montgomery mandates from the bottom-six, making him a welcomed addition to the team. Greer uses his speed and tenacity to his advantage, forcing rivals to slip up in their own defensive zones and then capitalizing on their mistakes.

The offense extends beyond the forward group, something Montgomery emphasized would be a focal point in scoring this year. Derek Forbort and Hampus Lindholm are the only two defensemen to tally goals so far, though offense has been coming from the back end. Mike Reilly and Lindholm have each tallied an assist, while Connor Clifton has recorded four.

### Defense

Though the Bruins' offense has improved, the defense has been shakier, with average goals per game allowed sitting at 3.75, up from 2.66 from the 2021-22 season.

Their struggle results primarily from defensive coverage breakdowns, both in-zone and off the rush. So far, five of the 15 goals the B's have given up have been from odd-man rush chances. Five more occurred when an opponent's found the Bruins' net uncovered.

No game better exemplifies these deficiencies than Tuesday night's loss to the Ottawa Senators, when the Bruins' defenseman struggled considerably. Three of Ottawa's seven (!) goals came when a Senator was wide open in front of helpless goaltender Jeremy Swayman, while two more came from rush plays where Ottawa sliced through the Bruins' defensemen, scoring easy goals.

These issues extend beyond Tuesday's game, as the B's were similarly leaky in their own zone against the Coyotes on Monday, but to a lesser extent. They allowed three consecutive goals between the second and third periods to let the Coyotes back into the fight, nearly dropping a game against one of the league's worst teams.

The issues the Bruins face in their own end of the ice are likely a product of Montgomery's system, authorizing defensemen to spring forward on offense a little sooner permitted when Cassidy was in charge. The balance between jumping forward and jumping the gun is yet to be found by the defense.

Without key defensemen Charlie McAvoy, Matt Grzelcyk, and Brandon Carlo—three of the NHL's best shutdown players—the Bruins aren't at full strength. They should bounce back when those three return, but they must find a way to defend without them in the meantime.

Limiting defensive breakdowns will be key if the Bruins want to achieve the balance that Montgomery believes is possible. On some nights, like the B's opening victory against the Washington Capitals, it seems doable, and on others, like the loss to the Senators, equilibrium feels out of reach.

Still, the Bruins are 3-1, a solid first week showing, and will have the chance to tweak things over the coming months while their top dogs in McAvoy, Grzelcyk, and Brad Marchand recover. With a bolstered forward group and offense coming from all throughout the lineup, the Bruins now only have to prove they can outscore their problems or tighten up in the D-zone, a feat they'll try to achieve on Thursday night when the Anaheim Ducks come to TD Garden.

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## Women's volleyball beats Salve Regina

*Cont. from Pg. 1*

The second set followed a similar pattern as the first, but the Lions soon took over, finishing the set on a controlled run. After Salve Regina's Brighton Solheim tallied one to tie the game 15-15, the Lions registered six consecutive points and dropped just two rallies en route to a 25-17 win, capped by a powerful kill from Combs.

In the third set—arguably the Lions' best, with a final score of 25-15—the team utilized the full depth of its bench, ending the game with 15 of its 18 players making an appearance in at least a set. Bond said this depth played a significant role in their victory.

"I don't think I've ever played on a team where there are so many people that I would trust in different positions," Bond said. "We had people playing in various spots tonight with confidence and composure. We have a deep bench with girls ready



Beacon Archives

to come in whenever we need them."

Friday's win improved the Lions to a 13-2 record, and with just seven regular season games

remaining, Read feels the team has put itself in a good position for postseason success.

"Our only two losses are to the top teams in the conference,"

Read said prior to the team's loss against Springfield on Oct. 15. "I feel like we could have won one of those games and the other one; the team just played better than us. We have the ability to compete and beat both those teams, and we'll probably see them in the playoffs."

The Lions' pair of losses were at the hands of the MIT Engineers and the Babson Beavers, nationally ranked 21st and 22nd, respectively. To beat them, Read believes small improvements are in order.

"The small changes will go a long way when it comes to playoffs," he said. "Hopefully, we're the team we want to be in two weeks."

Friday's game coincided with Emerson's Family Weekend, allowing family and friends to spectate the Lions' faceoff. Read highlighted the importance of having familiar faces in the crowd.

"I wanted to have a home game for families to attend," he said. "It's important to play

in our gym as much as possible, and that's why we did Friday night. It was a great atmosphere. The stands were probably the most packed we've had all year."

Bond added that having parents in the crowd is a morale boost, especially since few players on the team are from Massachusetts.

"[Family Weekend is] really special," she said. "I'm glad we kind of got to have a mix of people getting in different positions. It's cool to see families coming from all over the country really to watch us play, and we appreciate the support. I'm glad that we could pull out the win."

Carrying on their Family Weekend, the Lions lost in a five-set thriller against Springfield on Oct. 15.

The Lions will look to rebound following their loss to Springfield, taking on Clark University for another NEWMAC match-up on Oct. 18.

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